R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 018 411 TE 000 342

INDIVIDUALIZED READING IN THE LITERATURE PROGRAM.

BY- APPLEBY, BRUCE C.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENG.,CHAMPAIGN,ILL

PUB DATE NOV 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40 8P.

DESCRIPTORS- *ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, *INDIVIDUALIZED READING, *LITERATURE, *SECONDARY EDUCATION, *TEACHING METHODS, FICTION, INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMS, READING INTERESTS,

AS ONE MEANS OF TEACHING LITERATURE, INDIVIDUALIZED READING HAS PROVEN PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE IN STIMULATING STUDENTS TO READ ON THEIR OWN--AS AN EXPERIENCE RATHER THAN AS AN EXERCISE. INDIVIDUALIZED READING IS A TEACHER-GUIDED PROGRAM IN THE READING OF FICTION WHICH ALLOWS THE STUDENT TO CHOOSE WHAT HE READS OVER A CONTINUOUS PERIOD OF TIME. INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES ARE HELD PERIODICALLY TO DISCUSS THE BOOKS THE STUDENT HAS READ AND TO CHECK HIS PROGRESS. AFTER ONLY ONE YEAR OF SUCH A COURSE AT THE KEOKUK, IOWA, SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, 85 PERCENT OF THE INCOMING SENIORS REQUESTED TO TAKE IT. WITH THIS IMPETUS, A STUDY WAS UNDERTAKEN TO DETERMINE WHAT DIFFERENCES EXIST BETWEEN STUDENTS WHO TAKE INDIVIDUALIZED READING AND THOSE WHO DO NOT. TEST 7 OF THE IOWA TESTS OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ITED) AND THE "INVENTORY OF SATISFACTIONS FOUND IN READING FICTION" WERE ADMINISTERED TO STUDENTS IN AN INDIVIDUALIZED READING PROGRAM, TO STUDENTS WHO WANTED THE PROGRAM BUT WEREN'T TAKING IT, AND TO STUDENTS IN A REQUIRED LITERATURE COURSE. EACH GROUP CONTAINED 65 STUDENTS AT FOUR DIFFERENT ABILITY LEVELS. IN THE INVENTORY CATEGORIES OF RELAXATION, ESCAPE, AND ASSOCIATIONAL VALUES, THE INDIVIDUALIZED READING GROUP WAS FAVORED, BUT THE DIFFERENCES WERE NOT STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT. IN THE CATEGORY OF INFORMATION GAINED FROM FICTION, THE DIFFERENCE FAVORED THE INDIVIDUALIZED READING GROUP AND WAS SIGNIFICANT AT THE .01 LEVEL. RESULTS FAVORABLE TO INDIVIDUALIZED READING WERE ALSO SIGNIFICANT IN THE AREA OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT, AS WELL AS FROM THE ITED. WHEN USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER METHODS OF TEACHING LITERATURE, INDIVIDUALIZED READING APPEARS TO INCREASE STUDENTS' ENJOYMENT OF, FEELING FOR, AND UNDERSTANDING OF LITERATURE. (THIS ADDRESS WAS DELIVERED AT THE 1967 NCTE ANNUAL CONVENTION.) (DL)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED018411

Bruce C. Appleby
Southern Illinois University
Program B. 8. Reading in the Secondary School
N.C.T.E. Convention, Honolulu, 1967

INDIVIDUALIZED READING IN THE LITERATURE PROGRAM

One of the first assignments I give in my course in methods of teaching English is to have the students write a paper in which they look back at their experiences in high school English. I try to get them to tell me what they remember, to establish a point of view toward English teaching and to then tell me what they envision themselves as being when they will become English teachers. Last year one of my students wrote a very telling remark when she commented that: "My parents made me feel literature is an exciting experience; my high school English teachers made me feel literature is an exercise.

This raises some interesting questions as to how and why we teach literature. What do we hope the majority of our students will gain from reading literature? Hans Guth, in his scholarly treatise on the nature of the discipline called English, titled English Today and Tomorrow, has written that "the basic educational function of literature is that it broadens our horizons."

If a basic goal of education is to arouse a continuing interest in the kinds of ideas most adequately conveyed by books, then one starts to wonder about English teaching when he reads of a study, such as one done in 1952, where over 500 college students were asked to list the books they most liked and most disliked. The most disliked--Macbeth, Silas Marner, and Julius Caesar.

TE 000 342

Northrup Frye, the eminent literary critic, describes an incident in his fine book, The Educated Imagination. He tells how when he was in

school the class had to read Lorna Doone. The girl who sat beside him used to fish a love-story magazine out of her desk and read it on her knee when the teacher wasn't looking. Frye comments that "she obviously regarded these stories as much hotter stuff than Lorna Doone, and perhaps they were, but I'd be willing to bet something that they told exactly the same kind of story. To see these resemblances in structure will not, by itself, give any sense of comparative value, any notion why Shakespeare is better than the television movie. In my opinion, value-judgments in literature should not be hurried. It does a student little good to be told that A is better than B, especially if he prefers B at the time. He has to feel values for himself, and should follow his individual rhythm in doing so."

In a Gallup poll undertaken years ago, it was discovered that an affirmative answer to the question "Would an English teacher recommend this book?" was an almost invariable predictor of the book's probable failure.

This point of view, though perhaps extreme, nevertheless raises basic questions .

If you believe (1) a literature program should present books from contemporary literature to contemporary people, and (2) literary heritage is found in a series of ideas which are found in contemporary books as well as those of the past, and (3) a school should encourage its students to read what they want to read, guiding growth and development into an increasingly sophisticated approach, then we come to one of the major questions of research I have done on the comparative effectiveness of Individualized Reading as a method of teaching literature in the secondary school.

What is Individualized Reading? Basically, it is a teacher guided program in the reading of fiction which allows the student complete individual freedom of choice in what he reads over a continuous period of time.

Individualized Reading has received support in theory from such varied sources as national curriculum studies, methods textbooks, and actual classroom use since 1917. The NCTE has throughout its history sponsored national curriculum studies. In 1917, the Hosic report stated that the English curriculum must be modified to recognize individual differences in needs and ability.

In 1935, Hatfield reports that"the major emphasis on teaching literature is on development of sufficient skill and understanding to enable the student to read widely and personally."

Dora V. Smith has done several national studies which make these same basic conclusions.

Last year, in a study of English programs which consistantly educate outstanding students in English, the authors summarized and ranked the strengths of 218 high school English departments. Guided individual reading was found to have a rank order of 9 in the list of strengths of English departments.

As early as 1926, Washburn reported use of Individualized Reading in a study in Winnetka, Illinois. The English Journal since 1934 has had articles reporting the use of Individualized Reading techniques.

In 1961, the University of Iowa High School established a series of one-semester electives in speech, composition, and literature. One of the one-semester electives was--and is--titled Individualized Reading.

In this course, which provided the pattern for the research, the practice and procedure is quite simple--the students sit and read for a semester, choosing ANY BOOKS THEY WISH TO READ. Students are told to sign for individual conferences on the schedule sheet and on completing the book, they discuss with the teacher that book.

The conferences are about the book the student AND THE TEACHER have

read. Conferences are a sheer delight. To be able to sit and talk with a student about what he is reading, how he reacts to what he is reading, and what he is getting out of the book he has chosen is stimulating and delightful.

Before I go on to the research I've done, let me say to those of you who may feel skeptical, that are thinking "That's okay for a lab. school--but he doesn't have my students. Nothing will make them read. That idea will never work with my low ability students--my dumb-dumbs.

Read the book HOOKED ON BOOKS, by Daniel Fader. He describes an Individualized Reading program with disadvantaged and culturally impoverished boys in a boys' training school in Michigan. The boys in this junior high school ranged in age from twelve to eighteen and had an average reading level of fourth grade.

In the fall of 1965, Keokuk, Iowa, Senior High school, feeling a need to up-date their English program, moved to a system of one-semester courses, completely elective, for their seniors. Four years of study, meetings, inservice work, and groping led to their decision. They started with ideas for 51 possible courses for seniors. These were narrowed, after much discussion, to 15. A polling of the senior class of 1964-65 as to what courses they would have elected if they had had the chance limited the number to 8 courses--one of which was Individualized Reading. Every senior was given the right to choose--from one to six of the eight courses---or none.

In the spring of 1965, Mrs. Irene Evans, Mr. John Artmen and I consulted as to how the course in Individualized Reading might be conducted. Using the basic pattern of our course at U. High, which I was teaching, Mrs. Evans and Mr. Artmen were willing to give it a try. I'm sure they'll both admit that prior to their first year of teaching the course, they were

dubious and reluctant. It meant a great change, but there was a felt need for this change. There was a willingness to try it because something was needed to get the students at all levels of ability more involved in, aware of, and enjoying their reading--a way for them to experience literature.

We knew that after the first year of the course offerings, word would have gotten around very fast and very efficiently among the students as to the effectiveness and desirability of the course. Thus, the first "test" of Individualized Reading came in the spring of 1966, when the juniors filled out their registration and request forms for the courses they wanted to take as seniors. You can imagine our surprise and joy when 208 of the 246 juniors requested to take Individualized Reading as seniors--a whopping 85%.

With this impetus, the research started. What does happen in Individualized Reading? Does anything happen that doesn't happen under other types of instruction? What are the differences between students who have experienced Individualized Reading and those who haven't?

Fort Dodge, Iowa, Senior High School, agreed to serve as an outside control to the study. We felt it was necessary to somehow be able to realize not only the differences between those in Keokuk who had experienced Individualized Reading and those who had not but wanted to, but also the difference between those enrolled in an elective literature course and those enrolled in a required course.

The students were first placed in a rank order on the basis of their score on test7--"Ability to Interpret Literature" of the Iowa Tests of Educational Development. (ITED) Using state and local norms to find the breaking points of four different quartiles, a stratified random sampling was obtained. By this method, we could then determine what

difference existed at varying levels of ability, not just for high, average, or low students.

Since the major question was not what changes take place as a result of literature instruction through the Individualized Reading approach, but rather what differences, if any, exist between those who have had Individualized Reading and those who have not, no pretest was given. (for the statistically minded, the design is Campbell and Stanley Design No. 6, the posttest only control group design, which, because of stratified random sampling, controls 12 different variables which might effect internal and external validity.)

Thus, we had 65 students at 4 different ability levels, taking Individualized Reading; 65 students at 4 different ability levels in a control group who wanted Individualized Reading but weren't taking it; and 65 students at 4 different ability levels who were taking a required literature course.

Two measuring instruments were administered in January of this year. An alternate form of test 7 of the ITED was given and the Inventory of Satisfactions Found in Reading Fiction. This is a little known but extremely effective inventory which measures what satisfactions students feel they gain from reading fiction. It is a list of 90 statements of satisfactions "designed to give a picture of the student's total reaction to fiction," to which the students react by agreeing (I feel I do gain this satisfaction from reading fiction) disagreeing (I don't generally get this satisfaction from reading fiction) or being undecided.

The inventory breaks down into 6 different categories: Relaxation (I do enjoy reading fiction to relax); escape; associational values; reading to gain information; reading to gain satisfaction from and react

to the technical-critical aspects of fiction; and self-development.

The Inventory of Satisfactions Found in Reading Fiction, by the way, has an established reliability of..93.

Again, for the statistically minded--The tests applied to the data were A X B factorial design with independent groups, used to find analysis of variance. A ratio test to check equality of variability was applied; an interaction F to test the effects of leveling was applied; an F-test to compare significance of difference between the treatment means--between the three groups; and a t-test.

What did we find out? Are there differences--significant differences--between those who have experienced Individualized Reading and those who haven't?

On test 7 of the ITED, there was a significant difference favoring the Individualized Reading group, when compared to the Keokuk control, significant at the .05 level.

On the categories of relaxation, escape and associational values, there were differences favoring the Individualized Reading group but these differences were not statistically significant.

On information gained from fiction--do you get satisfaction from reading fiction in order to get insights into what life is like in other countries, to better understand human nature, to learn how other people view life?--there was a difference between the Individualized Reading group and the required course control and the combined controls favoring the Individualized Reading group, significant at the .01 level.

In the area of self-development--reading for broadening your knowledge, gaining experience, realizing ideas new to you, being stimulated to think, finding new interests--the difference between the Individualized Reading group and the control group in Keokuk favored the Individualized

Reading group at the .05 level; between the Individualized Reading groups and the required course control, the difference favored the Individualized Reading at the .01 level.

Now, what does this all mean? Does it mean you should all rush home and teach literature only one way--through Individualized Reading? Does it mean that any other way of teaching literature than Individualized Reading is wrong? NO.

Wilbur Hatfield, in An Experience Curriculum in English, 1935, describes how students must experience various approaches to literature--through common reading of the same book, through thematic units, through genre study and through Individualized Reading.

Individualized Reading does do something. Students at all levels of ability grow. Their attitudes do change as a result of Individualized Reading. Students under Individualized Reading do enjoy fiction--even when compared to those who wanted it also, but weren't allowed to enroll. Students do feel they gain from Individualized Reading.

Students gain a better appreciation for, feeling for, understanding of literature. They gain significantly in the insights into life that fiction offers; they feel they gain significantly in understanding human nature, in seeing the other person's point of view. They gain significantly in self-development--in vicarious experience, in realizing new ideas, in being stimulated to think. They gain significantly in being able to realize literature as literature--analyzing style, analyzing structures, realizing technique, realizing symbolism, seeing character development.

Is literature experience or exercise? Literature is, can be, and must be an experience--through Individualized Reading, it is.